

ANCIENT ARCHITECTURE OF IRELAND.



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL ARCHITECTURE OF IRELAND.

MR. PETRIE'S BOOK.

In a notice of Mr. Petrie's elaborate work on the origin and uses of the round towers of Ireland, already given,* we briefly extracted the writer's conclusions on this much debated question, and promised to refer again, more particularly to that part of the book which treats of ancient architecture in Ireland, generally. Before proceeding to redeem this promise, we lay before the reader a view of the perfect tower on Devenish Island, in Lough Erne, as an example (Fig. 4.), with part of Mr. Petrie's general description of the towers:—

"They are rotund, cylindrical structures, usually tapering upwards, and varying in height from fifty to, perhaps one hundred and fifty

feet; and in external circumference, at the base, from forty to sixty feet, or somewhat more. They have usually a circular, projecting base, consisting of one, two, or three steps, or plinths, and are finished at the top with a conical roof of stone, which frequently, as their is every reason to believe, terminated with a cross formed of a single stone. The wall, towards the base, is never less than three feet in thickness, but is usually more, and occasionally five feet, being always in accordance with the general proportions of the building. In the interior they are divided into stories, varying in number from four to eight, as the height of the tower permitted, and usually about twelve feet in height. These stories are marked either by projecting belts of stone, set-offs or ledges, or holes in the wall to receive joists, on which rested the floors, which were almost always of wood. In the uppermost of these stories the wall is perforated by two, four, five, six, or eight apertures, but most usually four, which

sometimes face the cardinal points, and sometimes not. The lowest story, or rather its place, is sometimes composed of solid masonry, and when not so, it has never any aperture to light it. In the second story, the wall is usually perforated by the entrance doorway, which is generally from eight to thirty feet from the ground, and only large enough to admit a single person at a time. The intermediate stories are each lighted by a single aperture, placed variously, and usually of very small size, though in several instances, that directly over the doorway is of a size quite less than that of the doorway, and would appear to be intended as a second entrance.

In their masonic construction they present a considerable variety: but the generality of them are built in that kind of careful masonry called spawled rubble, in which small stones, shaped by the hammer, in default of suitable stones at hand, are placed in every interstice of the larger stones, so that very little mortar

* See page 175, vol. III. This work forms vol. IX. of the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, and is published by Messrs. J. Adams and Smith, of Dublin, to whom we owe thanks.

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